

**INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT – SPAIN MUSLIM/MINORITY YOUTH PROJECT  
FINAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Funded by the US Department of State Bureau of Cultural Affairs, the Institute for Training and Development's Spain Muslim/Minority Youth (SPMY) Project was designed to support the successful integration of Muslim and other immigrant youth in Spain. According to the project proposal, its goals were: (1) to foster ongoing communication among professionals in Spain and the US who are in a position to influence outcomes for Muslim and other immigrant youth; and (2) to increase the quantity and quality of services extended to these youth and their communities.

To that end, twelve delegates from Spain spent three weeks in the United States in June of 2007. These immigrant support workers, educators, journalists, and local government officials attended lectures on a variety of topics related to immigration, integration, and the Muslim community. They heard from college professors, imams, rabbis, immigration attorneys, and Muslim immigrants to the United States; they met with immigration policy experts, educators of minority and immigrant children, community organizers, and youth workers in minority and immigrant communities. They visited Western Massachusetts, Boston, New York City, Chicago, and the District of Columbia. At the end of their trip, the Spanish delegates invited seven of the individuals they had met in the course of the program to visit Spain as part of a US delegation.

The following November, the US delegates traveled to Spain for a two-week period. Accompanied by ITD's SPMY Project Director, they visited the worksites of their Spanish colleagues and met with immigration policy experts, Muslim religious community leaders, and journalists. They worked with their counterparts in Spain to more fully develop the latter group's action plans. They also met with representatives from the US Embassy. Over the course of their visit, they traveled to Córdoba, Sevilla, Jerez, Lucena, Melilla, and Madrid.

The Institute for Training and Development (ITD), based in Amherst, Massachusetts, has twenty-three years of experience in the design and implementation of international training programs. ITD's in-country partner, the Córdoba English Teachers Association (CETA), has conducted national and international exchanges of educational information and practices for the past nine years.

ITD was the principal institutional organizer of the SPMY Project; CETA assisted with the recruitment of participants from Spain and was charged with planning the program in Spain for the US delegates.

## GOALS OF EVALUATION

ITD contracted The Community Consulting Initiative to develop and carry out a qualitative designed evaluation to examine the processes and outcomes of the SPMY Project. The goal of this evaluation was to produce summative findings that describe progress made toward specific objectives identified by the US Department of State and ITD as priority outcomes.

It is essential to note that the evaluation was not intended to prove causality of the project interventions designed by ITD; such analysis is outside the parameters of this evaluation design.

This evaluation was predicated on the supposition that its principal objective was to produce information useful to the program's stakeholders. As such, this report aims to summarize and analyze the findings of the evaluation process, and, consequently, to make actionable recommendations based on this analysis to improve organizational practices and inform future programming.

## FOCUS OF EVALUATIVE INQUIRY

Within the parameters of the methodological limitations described below [*please see page 6*], ITD and The Community Consulting Initiative collaborated on the creation of a qualitative evaluation formulated to explore, in a systematic fashion, progress made toward the project's original goals. The resulting evaluation design is described in this section and is attached as *Appendix A*.

The evaluative inquiry focused primarily on the following areas:

- **Value of the exchange for Spanish and US delegates;**
- **Outcomes correlating to participation in the exchange;**
- **Processes and outcomes related specifically to the Spanish participants' action planning development and implementation; and**
- **Suggestions for program improvement.**

## DATA SOURCES

This qualitative report consists of findings gleaned through standardized open-ended interviews with the participants in each of the two delegations, as well as with SPMY's Project Director.

## SPAIN PARTICIPANTS

ITD, in conjunction with CETA, selected twelve individuals from Spain to participate in the SPMY initiative. Among these delegates were five men and seven women; of these, three of the men were

Muslims who had immigrated to Spain from Northern Africa. The delegates work in education, journalism, city government, and immigrant-support agencies.

## US PARTICIPANTS

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A total of seven US residents and citizens were selected by their Spanish counterparts for participation in the second delegation. These seven individuals comprised a diverse group of five women, two men, two Muslims, two Latinas, five residents of Central and Western Massachusetts, two Chicagoans, schoolteachers, community organizers, nonprofit administrators, a city official, and a public policy expert. All work in linguistic and minority communities; many have years of experience with a various immigrant groups.

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ITD's SPMY Project Director – who participated as the eighth member of the US delegation – was also interviewed, with the specific intention of exploring the evaluative questions from the perspective of program planning and design.

## DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

All evaluative data were collected via standardized open-ended interview templates [*attached as Appendices B – F*]. These interviews included questions designed to elicit respondents' analyses of experiences and opinions related to these areas of inquiry.

In April and May of 2008, The Community Consulting Initiative interviewed the US delegates to Spain. Four of the Massachusetts residents participated in a two-hour group interview; the two Chicagoans participated in 1.5-hour telephone interviews. Due to a series of changes in her contact information, one delegate did not receive the invitation to participate in the evaluation process.

The protocol for the group interview conducted with the US participants is attached as *Appendix D*; the individual interview template utilized with US delegates is included as *Appendix E*. These interviews were conducted in English.

The Community Consulting Initiative spent ten days in Andalucía in May of 2008, during which time participants from Spain were interviewed in various configurations. Six delegates attended a half-day evaluative workshop held in Córdoba on May 10. These six also participated in individual or paired interviews.

Two delegates who live in distant parts of the country participated in 1.5-hour telephone interviews. The remaining four participants met with the evaluator for individual interviews that ranged in

duration from 1.5 hours to 2.5 hours; these interviews were held, variously, in Córdoba, Sevilla, and Jerez. These formal interviews were supplemented by site visits to the delegates' place of work, informal conversations, and unstructured observation. All of these interviews and conversations were held in Spanish.

The English translation of the agenda for the half-day workshop is attached as *Appendix B*; the template for the individual and pair interviews – also translated from Spanish – is *Appendix C*.

Post-travel, The Community Consulting Initiative interviewed SPMY's Project Director – that is, the ITD administrator who oversaw the SPMY initiative. The template for this English-language interview is attached as *Appendix F*.

The interview templates were developed in cooperation with ITD and were designed to address the overarching areas of evaluative inquiry, including: (1) value of the exchange; (2) outcomes correlating to participation in SPMY; (3) efficacy of the action planning process; (4) recommendations for program improvement; and (5) valuable lessons learned.

In order to explore the value of the exchange as well as the outcomes of their participation, delegates were asked:

- What have been the greatest benefits of your participation in this project? What were some of the unexpected benefits of your participation?
- What did you learn that you would be unlikely to learn in any other context?
- What relationships or networks have you developed as a result of your participation in SPMY?
- What have you learned from your SPMY colleagues here in [country of residence]?
- Describe any contact you've had with your international colleagues.
- How has this experience changed your professional practices?
- How has this experience affected you on a personal level?

Among the expected outcomes for the Spanish participants were results related to their action plans. As such, the line of inquiry directed toward this group included an assessment of the action planning process, from development to implementation. The evaluation endeavored to ascertain participants' perception of the utility and efficacy of action plans, the outcomes they achieved through their action plans, and their recommendations for improving the process by which action plans are developed. To this end, Spanish delegates were also asked:

- Describe your experience of the action planning process.
- What benefits have you derived from the action planning process?
- How has the action planning process supported your ability to work toward your goals?
- What challenges have you confronted in the action planning process?

With respect to program improvement, all delegates were asked about the challenges of their participation as well as their recommendations for program improvement:

- What aspects of your participation in the project were most positive?
- What were the challenges of participating as a member of the delegation?
- What improvements to the program would you suggest?

The evaluative interview with ITD's SPMY Project Director was designed to explore organizational considerations and program design decisions. This line of inquiry included questions about progress toward agency-specific objectives, ITD's experience with action planning, and valuable lessons learned over the course of the SPMY Project:

- What were the principal objectives ITD intended to accomplish through the SPMY initiative?
- Of these, which have you achieved? In what ways have you progressed toward your other objectives?
- What are some of the unexpected outcomes that arose from this project?
- What positive outcomes have you observed in the Spaniards' use of action plans?
- What challenges did you encounter in your attempts to facilitate the action planning process with the SPMY participants?
- In the context of ITD's historical experience with action planning, what are the characteristics of groups or individuals who are successful with this model? What are the characteristics of groups or individuals who find this process more challenging?
- What unique lessons have you learned thus far from your agency's experience with SPMY?
- Given these, what changes would you implement if you could plan the initiative again?
- How might these lessons inform your future programs?

In addition to these standardized open-ended interviews, The Community Consulting Initiative also conducted a comprehensive review of archival documents related to the project, including:

- ITD's Project Proposal to US Department of State
- Spanish Delegates' Action Plans
- Updates to Action Plans
- Satisfaction Surveys Completed by Spanish Delegates
- Impact Reports Prepared by US Delegates
- Interim Reports to the US Department of State

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND LIMITATIONS

Evaluations are shaped by the methodological approaches employed as well as by the circumstances surrounding their execution. It is generally useful to note these and to look critically at the extent to which they inform the content of the evaluation itself:

- The present evaluation was carried out by The Community Consulting Initiative, which provides third-party, independent evaluation services. The results of a third-party evaluation are typically considered to be free of research bias.
- All data collection processes and analyses were conducted by a single, bilingual evaluator. The constancy of perception and behavior of one evaluator provides consistency across factors including interview execution, language, coding of qualitative data, and data analysis.
- The evaluation was initiated during the final phase of the SPMY Project. This circumstance precluded the use of measurement tools to assess pre-activity and post-activity attitudes and behaviors. As a result, the evaluation did not measure changes or outcomes according to an objective scale; rather, the evaluation process was dependent upon the data sources to report their own perceptions in this regard.
- It was not feasible to employ quantitative measurements – such as Likert Scales or Semantic Differentials, which are most effective when comparing pre- and post-program results.
- This evaluation was exclusively qualitative in nature. Given the small number of data sources – twelve delegates from Spain, seven from the United States, and one ITD administrator – it was determined to be neither advisable nor meaningful to represent qualitative data in statistical terms [for example, "66% of US participants shared this opinion"]. Instead, the responses, ideas, and concepts highlighted in the body of this report represent the result of a systematic coding process, in which words, phrases, and ideas repeated across the collected data are organized into themes and categories. In addition, some "outlier" opinions are represented in the report, especially when they give voice to concerns that are actionable vis-à-vis future programming.
- Because this evaluation process could not be coordinated with ITD's internal evaluation or the evaluation session facilitated at the US Department of State, there is some unavoidable overlap in the respective lines of inquiry. This repeated questioning may have had an effect on the manner in which the interviewees responded, although it could be argued that changes in self-reporting over time reflect an evolving interpretation of the experience.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the findings outlined in the remainder of this report are considered to be systematic, objective, and actionable.

## FINDINGS

### VALUE OF EXCHANGE

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The significance of the mutual exchange in the context of the SPMY Project cannot be overstated. Its importance was very clear to the participants themselves; the mutual nature of the project was a frequent theme throughout the evaluative interviews.

#### ☉ *SPANISH DELEGATION*

The findings of these qualitative interviews indicate that the visiting delegates from Spain consider SPMY to be an important and worthwhile endeavor. Participants underscored: (1) the crucial element of mutuality in the exchange; (2) their genuine interest in and admiration for the community-based agencies in the US that work with immigrant and other minority populations; (3) the cultural and interpersonal challenges of their own delegation; and (4) a tremendous appreciation for the work of ITD.

- **Mutuality**

Members of the Spanish delegation were of the opinion that the mutual nature of the initiative was the key to its success. **Reciprocity in the context of the SPMY Project was described as "fundamental," "essential," and "gratifying."**

The group members were pleased to receive the US delegation in Spain; they were especially glad to have the opportunity to return the hospitality they had received in the US. As one participant said, "When [the US delegates] came [to Spain], we were able to be equals – colleagues with shared objectives."

- **Exposure to Models of Immigrant and Minority Integration**

Through a combination of formal presentations and visits to community agencies, the delegates were offered a wide variety of information on the historical as well as current situations of many immigrant groups in the US.

Most delegation members commented that these presentations were valuable; interviewees used terms like "very informative" and "interesting" to describe them. ITD's internal evaluation documents illustrate a range of opinions about the various speakers.

There were divergent opinions expressed regarding the appropriate degree of mutuality in these lectures. A number of participants commented that some members of their delegation had initiated

too many debates with the presenters and among themselves; conversely, other delegates felt that there had not been sufficient time allotted for exploration and debate of the complex issues raised by the presenters.

Although they expressed appreciation for the formal presentations, **all of the participants voiced a preference for the visits to community organizations**. Delegates conveyed admiration for those who work with immigrants, refugees, and youth; they were excited by what they heard and saw. Most reported that they had learned more from these interactions than from the lectures. According to some, these visits offered new ideas to explore; in the words of one participant, these experiences are important reminders that "there are always other ways to do things and areas for improvement."

When asked about the ways that their participation in SPMY had affected their professional practices, many of the respondents mentioned the ideas or practices that they had learned about on their visits to these community agencies. The three concepts mentioned most frequently included **community-based organizing**, **leadership training for immigrants**, and **empowerment of immigrants and refugees**.

Members of the Spanish delegation work in a country where citizens look to their government to remedy social ills. Community-based organizing introduced them to "another way of working" and "a new way of thinking" about the integration of people who have been marginalized. The immigrant support workers from Spain were very impressed by US models of leadership training and empowerment; they expressed hope that these would soon be standard components of immigrant support services in Spain, in order to prepare immigrants to participate more fully in their agencies and in society.

Another concept that caught the attention of Spanish delegates is what they referred to as the "double identity" of many Americans – such as African-Americans, Irish-Americans, and Muslim-Americans. The participants who shared this observation noted that the Americans seemed "proud" of their complex cultural identities; this surprised them, as they had assumed that American multiculturalism necessarily led to an obliteration of ethnicity.

Some participants were eager to explore how they might apply US models of immigrant integration in their own work; others did not consider these models to be applicable to the situation in Spain.

Although all of the delegates remarked that their overall image of the United States was much improved as a result of their visit [*see page 15*], some of their impressions of American efforts in the realm of immigrant integration were negative. One delegate voiced skepticism about the descriptions of immigrants' lives in the US; she implied that these portrayals were too good to be true. She would have welcomed the opportunity to speak directly to a diverse group of recent immigrants to "hear how they feel and to see how they live."

A few participants expressed concern about the segregation they observed in neighborhoods and schools. Many were perplexed by the American flags posted outside of homes, which they perceived as ubiquitous, unnecessary, and intentionally divisive. They were also confused by the "mixed messages" communicated about illegal immigration.

Some of the delegates were surprised and disappointed to learn that the US government does not provide more support for new immigrants; they believe that such support facilitates eventual integration. Although they were very impressed by the work of community-based organizations, they felt strongly that this must be supplemented by government programs.

- **Lessons From The Delegation**

Interestingly, many of the "lessons learned" cited by the delegates emanated from the dynamics of the group itself; these interactions, as described by SPMY's Project Director, ranged from cooperative to contentious. The members of the delegation, by their own description, held a wide range of ideas, opinions, cultural perspectives, and priorities.

Although the group was diverse in many ways, it appeared to be divided above all by the participants' varying levels of experience with Muslim immigrants. As one delegate noted, **differences in their respective levels of knowledge, familiarity, and commitment in this regard resulted in differing expectations vis-à-vis their participation in SPMY.** There were, by all accounts, conflicts and tensions within the group that were alternately political and personal.

Those who came to the group with less experience in immigrant *and/or* Muslim communities commented more frequently about the advantages of the delegation's diversity. One participant mentioned that her experience within the Spanish delegation had taught her to listen and respect other ways of thinking; as she phrased it, "I learned that we are less tolerant than we think we are." A second delegate mirrored this response: "I wasn't as open-minded as I'd thought."

One non-Muslim participant commented that she had learned more about her own country through her participation in SPMY; she was grateful for the opportunity to engage in "deep and important" conversation with her Muslim compatriots and to gain new perspectives on immigration. Learning to work in a diverse group and to debate respectfully were considered by some delegates to be very valuable lessons resulting from this experience.

Those already engaged in immigrant work interpreted these differences less favorably. Most felt that the project would have been enriched by a greater proportion of Muslim representation; others suggested that greater geographic diversity among delegates would have served the group well. Many of these participants suggested that the wide variation in levels of commitment and expertise among

delegates diminished the effectiveness of the project; they felt that participants should have been selected on the basis of their engagement with immigration and immigrant integration.

In yet another illustration of these conflicting perspectives, one Muslim participant stated that, in his opinion, there had been little learning generated from within the group; he observed what he felt was a closed and defensive posture on the part of many of his colleagues.

- **Praise for ITD**

Although there were no questions in the interview protocol that asked explicitly for feedback on the role of ITD, such input was forthcoming and overwhelmingly positive. The visitors from Spain spoke of being "well-received" and "well-attended." They praised ITD, which, in their estimation, is an "excellent organization." **The vocabulary chosen to describe ITD and SPMY included the Spanish translations of "stupendous," "marvelous," "well-organized," "balanced," "open," and "transparent."** Julie Hooks Davis, SPMY's Project Director, was singled out for praise; she was called the Spanish equivalents of "magnificent," "personable and professional," "hard-working," "courteous," and "considerate."

Delegates appreciated the many ways in which they were attended to: One Muslim participant spoke of arriving at his accommodations and being told – without having to ask – where in the apartment he should stand to face Mecca at prayer time. When asked what he had learned as a result of his participation in SPMY, this delegate said, "That I have to treat others as I have been treated."

In the words of one participant, "ITD's conduct has been impeccable."

- *US DELEGATION*

In response to questions about the value of the exchange, US delegates highlighted: (1) the privilege and power of international travel; (2) the importance of mutuality in the project design; (3) their broadened perspectives on immigration issues; (4) an appreciation for Spanish models of immigrant integration; (5) a new exposure to Muslims and Muslim cultures; (6) the benefits of learning from the perspectives of their US travelling companions; and (7) an appreciation for the role of ITD.

- **Overall Assessment of Exchange**

Participants uniformly described their experiences in Spain as "really remarkable," "profound," "an important opportunity for reflection," "very positive," and "unique." In their estimation, the trip offered delegates a global perspective and a "constant learning experience about the processes and experiences of immigration."

The word "powerful" was repeated again and again by almost all of the delegates. "Appreciation" was another oft-used term; participants were grateful for what they called the "privilege" of having

been part of the delegation. One member summarized her colleagues' viewpoints by describing this type of exchange as a "life-long, life-changing experience."

Delegation members emphasized the value of international travel; **many of them reiterated that there is "no substitute" for the first-hand experience of being in another country.**

One respondent in the group interview referred to a recent public address made by British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, in which Brown had noted the need to develop people-to-people exchanges among professionals in order to build and maintain relationships among countries. The delegates pointed to SPMY as a prime example of this:

- "People [in other countries] hear about our government, but they don't know the American people. These exchanges are a way of connecting us to the rest of the world – of cultivating global understanding, not from a political perspective, but from human, common, shared experiences."
- "This program is an example of powerful 'bottom-up' diplomacy. On a global level, this bottom-up model – [wherein] average people talk to average people – benefits everyone."
- "Our role as small 'a' ambassadors allowed us to represent the country as individuals."
- "We talked with Muslim youth and elders and they said to us, 'We know that [the war in Iraq] is not your fault. We know that's your government. We just want to talk to you as people.'"
- "The world is disconnected: We don't know the people of other countries; we label each other by what our governments do. The most important thing about this trip was engaging with people on a personal level, rather than with or through governments."

#### • **Mutuality**

Like their Spanish counterparts, members of the US delegation expressed the strong opinion that the element of exchange was essential to SPMY's success.

One participant noted that **it was very instructive to speak with members of the Spanish delegation in the US and "have their misperceptions put to rest" – and then to recognize her own misperceptions and find them similarly corrected during her travels to Spain.** She noted these misperceptions can be dangerous, as they are often shared by those who create policy.

A number of participants commented that the order of the visits was of critical importance. In the opinion of the US delegates, it was imperative for their Spanish colleagues to come to the US first, as: (1) This allowed those from Spain to see the reality of the work in the US – "warts and all" – and thereby diminished any notion that those from the US were "experts" who would travel to Spain and expound on how things should be done there; and (2) There was an established sense of familiarity with the Spanish delegates before the trip to Spain, which, in the words of one participant, "totally transformed the nature of the relationship, the level of trust, and what they were willing to share with us."

- **Broader Perspective on Immigration**

All of the respondents cited considerable learning gains in the area of immigration and related policy. One delegate was struck by the universality of the immigration experience: the process of adaptation through which all immigrants must pass; the strapped institutions that are intended to assist them during this process; and the inevitable tensions between immigrant communities and the rest of society. Many delegates were struck by the ways in which history can inform current immigration circumstances and policies, as evidenced so clearly in Andalucía. These themes resonated throughout the evaluative interviews.

**Almost all spoke of a newfound appreciation for the complexity and interconnectedness of global immigration;** in their words: "I learned that policy can't be developed in a vacuum; our immigration policy must respond to global and not just domestic factors"; "We have to think about how our policies affect other countries"; "It's valuable to have a point of comparison for US immigration practices and policies"; and "We also need to learn from best practices in other places."

- **Models of Spanish Response to Immigration**

US delegates were surprised by the extent of the Spanish government's support for immigrants – especially for undocumented immigrants. **They were very impressed by Spain's considerable investment in immigrant integration:** shelters for recent immigrants [*casas de acogida*]; programs for unaccompanied minors; and, especially, the model of intercultural mediation, in which support workers are charged with brokering and advocating across language and culture.

Participants were conscious of the fact that immigration is still a new phenomenon in Spain. They applauded the creativity, dedication, entrepreneurialism, and compassion that drive the emergent infrastructure of immigrant support. Juxtaposing the situation in Spain with that in the US, a few participants contemplated the sustainability of Spain's governmental response.

- **Exposure to Islam and Muslim Culture**

**All of the non-Muslim delegates from the United States noted the profound impact that enduring exposure to Muslim culture had on each of them.** These experiences – with their Muslim compatriots as well as with the Muslims they encountered in Spain – were at once personal, cultural, social, and political:

- "Before this experience, I didn't know anyone closely who identified as Muslim."
- "I had not been as intentional about building bridges with Muslims as I had with other [cultures]."
- "I had never been in a mosque and wouldn't have otherwise dared to enter one."
- "I gained a deeper understanding of Islam."

- "I learned a lot about Muslim culture and faith and how those play out in the immigrant experience."
- "We were engaged in a constant learning process about the reality of being Muslim in Spain and in the US, which was hugely significant."
- "We have a rapidly growing population of Muslims, so it was very important for me to learn as much as I could over this two-week trip – I can't tell you how much I welcomed this."

A Muslim delegate commented, along the same lines, that his visit to a synagogue in Spain was a first for him: "It was amazing to see how similar [the service] was to Muslim practice."

### • **Benefits of Delegation Membership**

Members of the US delegation commented on how much they had gained from their newly-established connections to each other. Most of them had never met before, although a few Western Massachusetts participants knew each other slightly.

Almost all of the interviewees mentioned that they were very pleased with the size and diversity of their delegation: "The make-up of the group contributed to the success of the program"; "Good balance among members: mix of Muslims and non-Muslims, Latinos and non-Latinos"; "The size of the delegation allowed for a level of intimacy and sharing"; and "The value of diverse representation is very important – representatives from multiple levels, like schools, nonprofits, government."

One member wondered if the delegation would have been enhanced by more diverse geographic representation: "If the goal was for us to be ambassadors of immigrant communities across the US, there could have been much greater geographic diversity. [That said,] the group of people who participated was amazing."

Offering a contrasting perspective, the delegates from Western Massachusetts reported that they had benefited from their geographic proximity. For this contingent of participants, their connection to each other was – at least theoretically – more easily maintained. Although at the time of the group interview they had not assembled since their return from Spain, they spoke of themselves as part of a "team" and as potential "collaborators." They reported that they had been able to compare their local challenges in immigrant and minority communities over the course of the trip; after sharing this experience, they wanted to consider how they could support each other's work back in the US.

**All of the delegates agreed that they gained a great deal from each other's perspectives during their travels in Spain.** One participant in the group interview described this benefit as follows, accompanied by heads nodding vigorously in agreement:

Not only did we experience really powerful things, but then we had the opportunity to debrief them among ourselves. Every day, we had the opportunity to ask each other:

"What did you experience and what did you take away from that?" In any given experience on the trip, I learned maybe 60% from the [encounter] itself, and another 40% in the process of debriefing with the other delegates, who might say "in my culture..." or "what I heard from that was..." This process allowed us to learn more than we would have otherwise. Traveling as a group was really important in this way. ITD forces that experience, and that intensity of engagement was very positive.

- **Appreciation for ITD**

Like their Spanish peers, US participants offered unsolicited praise for ITD and CETA. They appreciated the planning that went into their trip; a number of delegates commented that it was "amazing" that the logistics worked so well, considering the intensity of their travel itinerary. They felt the trip was a good mix of lectures and visits to immigrant support centers, schools, and cultural sites. *[Recommendations for improvements from both delegations begin on page 22.]*

They were grateful for ITD's overall objectives: "ITD recognizes the value of our going to other places to understand others' struggles and to learn best practices"; "**For ITD to invest in us, to allow us to step away from our desks and immerse ourselves in this issue – that's something that is irreplaceable.**"

One participant related how she had been able – since returning from Spain – to make some culturally appropriate changes to the services offered to a Muslim client: "He couldn't thank me enough. He should have thanked ITD."

## **OUTCOMES RELATED TO PARTICIPATION**

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As is posited above *[please see "Methodological Approaches and Limitations"]*, the design of this evaluation does not allow for the assignment of causality. However, it is nevertheless useful within this evaluative context to explore the extent to which the project's participants credit their experiences with self-reported changes or outcomes.

- *SPANISH DELEGATION*

For members of the Spanish delegation, the most concrete examples of program-related outcomes are manifested in their action planning processes, described in the following section *[please see page 17]*. However, delegates also reported a variety of other outcomes that can be categorized broadly as: (1) improved perceptions of the United States; (2) a shift in attitude about immigrants; and (3) activities motivated by their SPMY experiences but unrelated to their action plans.

- **Significant Changes in Perception of United States**

Participants related that their impressions of the SPMY Project – and with it, their impressions of the United States – changed dramatically over the course of the exchange. They spoke of their initial suspicions about SPMY as a government-funded program; as one delegate put it: "I wondered what they wanted. What would they try to 'sell' us?"

**All respondents articulated some version of the sentiment that their trip to the US had significantly changed their opinion of the country.** Participants described their visit as follows:

- "It was an important opportunity to correct inaccurate perceptions [about the US]."
- "It served as an antidote to [what we read in] the press."
- "It was a chance to rid myself of prejudices."
- "It surmounted [existing] stereotypes."
- "Stereotypes were broken."
- "The trip transformed [my] ideas about the United States."
- "I got to know the reality of the United States and its people."
- "It improved [my] attitude about the United States."
- "I understood the reality of immigration in the US."
- "Don't judge before you meet the people."
- "[Our experiences] clashed with our uninformed opinions of the US."
- "I have a totally different vision of the US."

One Muslim participant talked about the multiplying effect his visit has had; he reported that he now feels the obligation to challenge uninformed allegations about the United States by saying, "Have you been there? Because I have been there, and that is not what I experienced." **Another Muslim delegate stated, succinctly and eloquently, "Exchange is the best vaccine against hate, misunderstanding, and fanaticism."**

- **Attitudes**

Delegates who had little experience working with immigrants reported significant changes in their levels of understanding and sensitivity about immigration issues.

Delegates with more experience returned to Spain with new ideas regarding how to change the attitudes of others. Some reported that they had become spokespeople among their colleagues in defense of the American people [*referenced above*]. One participant spoke of wanting to create a "new message" about immigrants modeled on the Center for New Americans, a program he had visited in Massachusetts; instead of "immigrant" versus "citizen" – which is the current paradigm in Spain – he hoped to encourage others in his region to talk in terms of "New Andalusians."

- **Activities**

One of the participating educators from Spain was motivated by SPMY to take on a number of new immigration-related projects, including an ongoing letter exchange between her school's students and linguistic minority children who attend the school of a US teacher-delegate; a multilingual student poetry reading on the theme of immigration; and a school theater project about immigration. She recruited other teachers from her school to participate in these activities, as well.

An immigrant support worker reported that he had "adopted and adapted" the internal evaluation processes modeled by ITD throughout the course of the delegation's visit to the US.

Another participant spoke of his intention to explore the creation of a parent-child program for linguistic minority families *and/or* an Arabic-language Muslim school, modeled on those he visited in the US. He noted, however, that time and funding are some of the obstacles that stand in the way of the application of the new ideas with which he and his colleagues returned to Spain.

- **US DELEGATION**

Given that the US delegates were not asked to develop action plans or to articulate learning objectives prior to travel, it was a challenge to measure the outcomes of their participation in SPMY. Nevertheless, delegation members reported: (1) changes in their professional approaches or practices resulting from this experience; (2) an "altered lens" on issues of immigration; and (3) publicity related to their participation.

- **Work-Related Processes and Practices**

One delegate focused on the most practical aspect of work models: the hours that her agency is open. Having observed Spanish groups that serve immigrant communities at all hours of the day and night, she met with her staff to consider a "change in the way they do business."

Another participant felt that her agency's support of her participation in the delegation – as well as their support of her post-travel presentations and meetings – was in and of itself a significant change in her workplace. This support, in her view, "implies an appreciation for what we can learn from other models and other countries."

All of the delegates were very impressed by the role of the Spanish "intercultural mediators" – a concept and phenomenon that is still unknown in the US [*referenced on page 12*]. Many participants expressed an intention to explore this model further.

- **"Altered Lens"**

**Many delegates had difficulty identifying concrete outcomes related to SPMY, but they spoke readily of changes in perspective; the words "lens," "perspective," and "understanding" were all used with regularity** throughout the interviews:

- "When I develop immigration policy in the context of my work, I am able to [call upon] what I learned from my trip to Spain to help me think through various models. [SPMY] has given me a broader lens; the international experience really enriches what I can contribute to my daily work."
- "When I speak on issues of immigration now, I am able to say 'here's what they do in Spain,' which creates an awareness of immigration as an issue that affects other countries, not just the United States."
- "I know that I have a broader perspective on a policy level, but I can't yet put my finger on how I do things differently as a result."
- "[As a general practice,] I incorporate a global perspective of inclusiveness in my teaching. Now, I include Spain and its 'way of knowing'; for me, this is multiculturalism: understanding a new 'way of knowing.'"
- "This experience opened my perspective in a profound way. After the trip, I began to look at situations here, including my interactions with new immigrants, in a much broader fashion. Before I might [have thought], 'This person just arrived – what does she need?' Now I also consider what might have happened to this person before he got here. What might have been the motivation for coming? How is she doing emotionally? Who came with him? Who stayed home?"
- "In my work with Muslims, my own level of understanding is much broader, much deeper. This is of great value to my work – and a credit to ITD."

- **Publicity and Presentations**

Many of the US delegates have made a concerted effort to share their new perceptions with others. They have made individual as well as joint presentations to public school communities, city officials, and religious leaders. Their involvement in SPMY has been documented in local newspapers and university publications. One delegate was spurred by her experience to arrange an exchange between her Christian community of worship and a local mosque.

In the words of one delegation member, "This has been of value to [my] whole city, not just to me."

## **ACTION PLANNING PROCESS**

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As a function of their participation in SPMY, each member of the Spanish delegation was required to develop an "action plan" that responded to an identified need or opportunity in the realm of immigrant integration in Spain. These plans were developed during travel in the US and were to be implemented upon participants' return to Andalucía.

## ● SPANISH DELEGATION

ITD's internal evaluation documents indicate that the initial action planning process was challenging and, for some participants, somewhat problematic. However, by the time the formal evaluation was conducted almost a full year later, the members of the Spanish delegation did not question their responsibilities in this regard.

The twelve delegates from Spain collaborated on a total of seven action plans, including:

- A partnership between a public school and local immigrant support agency;
- A regional campaign to promote balanced journalistic reporting vis-à-vis Muslims and other minority immigrants;
- A regional magazine issue about the SPMY Project;
- A digital literacy initiative targeting marginalized Moroccan women;
- The establishment of a faith-based initiative designed to bring Muslims – especially Muslim youth – together in Jerez;
- The creation of an inclusive forum for cross-cultural dialogue in Melilla; *and*
- A multifaceted empowerment project for Muslim immigrant youth in Sevilla.

In the course of the evaluative interviews, Spanish participants highlighted: (1) their commitment to the action plans; (2) steps taken toward the implementation of the plans; and (3) the challenges they encountered in developing as well as implementing the plans.

### • Motivation and Commitment

Based on interviews with members of the Spanish delegation, **it appeared that the action planning process had accomplished its objective of sustaining interest, linkages, and commitment to the integration of Muslim immigrants in Spain.**

For some delegates— especially those whose daily work is not devoted exclusively to immigration, the action planning process afforded them the opportunity and motivation to cultivate their commitment to the issue. One participant described her gratitude for the action planning process: "We often want to do something, but need a push. [Action planning] gave us the idea of how to improve the situation of Muslim immigration in Spain."

For those whose daily work is primarily in the field of immigration, the action plans provided the occasion to modify existing or incipient processes or plans. For example, participation in SPMY prompted one action planning team to tailor an existing organizational plan to focus exclusively on Muslim youth.

For those delegates who developed action plans in conjunction with one or more SPMY colleagues, the action planning process also served to obligate continued contact among participants.

- **Concrete Steps toward Implementation**

**The outcomes achieved thus far vary greatly from plan to plan.** At the time of these evaluative interviews in May 2008, most of the Spanish participants had made significant progress on their action plans: many had put the programmatic mechanisms in place to move forward with their plans, and one or two had successfully completed their projects.

The action planning team composed of the teacher and immigrant support worker had already carried out the activities proposed in their plan. The organizers had aimed to devise an approach that was, in their words, "viable, rather than spectacular." This pair developed a thoughtful and thorough strategy to prepare public school students for a field trip to a local immigrant support agency. For many of the students, the visit was their first "real-world encounter" with immigration. *[In fact, the organizers reported that prior to this activity, many of the students thought that the "casas de acogida" – or shelters for unaccompanied minors – were reformatories.]* According to the teacher, this project raised awareness among students and educators regarding the need to integrate Muslim youth into Spanish society. According to the immigrant support worker, the project also served to establish important linkages between the agency and the schools, which can serve as channels for education and outreach. After the visit, students engaged in a number of immigration-related projects and have become "experts" on the topic. This increased awareness expanded to students' families in some cases, as a number of parents participated in the field trip. At the time of the interview, the action plan team intended to schedule additional visits with the students.

Another action planning group had developed but not yet administered a survey designed to probe journalists' attitudes about Muslims. The results of this survey are to be used as the basis for a campaign to educate and sensitize journalists in Córdoba about the importance of balanced reporting vis-à-vis Muslims and minority immigrants.

A group of three delegates collaborated on the production of a magazine issue designed to document the SPMY Project. Members of the Spanish delegation wrote articles for publication; in addition, immigration experts in Spain were asked to contribute topical commentaries. The delegation's action plans were to be included, as well. The issue – which has since been printed – is intended to raise consciousness and sensitivity among its readership with respect to the immigrant experience. The issue will likely be made available in PDF format on the Internet.

One delegate's ambitious action plan proposed a long-term initiative designed to promote digital literacy, employability, and entrepreneurship to a small group of women in Northern Morocco. The stated goal of the project is to encourage economic stability in poor Moroccan families – making it unnecessary for them to send their sons to Spain. At the time of the interview, this participant had

recruited collaborating partners from Spain and Morocco, designed a train-the-trainer curriculum to insure the model's sustainability, and had prepared a proposal to solicit the funds necessary to make the project possible.

Another delegate joined forces with others in Jerez to form a local Muslim association. This association is intended to precede the eventual creation of an interfaith initiative modeled on the Interfaith Youth Core of Chicago; however, its planners recognized the need for this first step in order to encourage a positive, collective identification from within the Muslim community – especially its young people. *[This participant referenced in his action plan and interview the desire to replicate the concept of "double identity" observed among racial and ethnic groups in the United States; see page 8.]* This association is presently researching funding opportunities to sustain its work.

In the autonomous city of Melilla, one delegate brought together a broad-based group of residents with the intention of creating a forum for cross-cultural dialogue. Although this participant described uneven involvement from representatives of the various community sectors, she also reported that the partners had begun to facilitate inclusive dialogue about health and health care in their predominately immigrant community. They were able to procure the participation of a large number of Muslim women to engage in relevant conversations with health care professionals on one occasion, and to debate the question of organ donation on another. According to the organizer, these interchanges have altered the behavior of the women as well as the health care providers. The group intends next to tackle the topics of education, employment, and housing.

Two delegates who work at the same immigrant support organization based their shared action plan on activities that had been under development at their workplace, which they subsequently tailored to the needs and assets of immigrant Muslim youth – especially young men. Their stated objective is to create a sense of belonging, as well as opportunities for positive engagement, for these young people. After reviewing and revising the plan in conjunction with their co-workers, they realized they needed an "entry point" to the neighborhood where many of these young people can be found. They identified a young man with leadership potential and shared the plan with him; together, they created a situation analysis and moved ahead with specific ideas. They created a meeting space close to the local mosque – a place where they hope the young people will feel a sense of belonging and affiliation. Among other plans in development, the group aims to broadcast their own radio show.

**Overall, it is noteworthy that the outcomes resulting from these plans include not only an expansion or improvement of services to Muslim youth and their communities, as originally posited, but also an increased awareness about the plight of Muslim immigrants across various sectors of Spanish society.**

- **Challenges to Action Planning Development and Implementation**

The action planning process presented various challenges for participants.

With respect to the development phase, **a number of delegates explained that it was unrealistic for them to commit to a plan before consulting with their organizational colleagues in Spain.** In fact, when some of them returned to Spain, they found that their plans required significant revision. One participant voiced her strong opinion that too much time was dedicated to the development of action plans – time that was taken from the trip's agenda; this participant suggested that action planning activities could have been carried out in the evenings.

The challenges encountered in the implementation of the plans can be categorized as follows: **logistical difficulties**, such as insufficient time and unforeseen developments; **inconsistent involvement from organizational or community partners** – especially in those cases where these partners are not SPMY participants; and **insufficient funding to allow for the full execution of the plan.** In all cases, these factors slowed progress on the action plans; in one case, logistical changes brought the plan to a halt. In more than one instance, lack of funding had led to limited or scaled-back implementation of the plans.

Regarding this latter issue, some delegates voiced the need for **financial support in order to make their plans feasible and sustainable.** One action planning group was able to procure outside funding for their project, while others were attempting to do so.

One participant suggested that ITD provide two distinct types of technical assistance for action planning groups: (1) an orientation to international funding sources that might support the plans, and (2) ongoing technical assistance in the implementation of the action planning process.

Despite these challenges, **most delegates viewed the action planning process in a positive light.** One participant described it as a form of enrichment, as well as the opportunity to create long-term benefits: "These small steps are indispensable in the march toward lasting change."

#### ● *US DELEGATION*

**One unexpected finding was the disappointment on the part of many delegates – from the US and Spain alike – that the US participants were not required to develop action plans.**

This issue was initially raised by respondents in the course of the group interview with US participants. One of the delegates interviewed individually also commented on a need for greater direction regarding her post-travel responsibilities; although she has taken many steps to further discussion about immigration in her community and her workplace, she recognizes that "some [delegates] might have done nothing – it would be easy to get too busy." She suggested that it would behoove ITD to clarify their expectations in this regard, "like with the Spanish delegates and their action plans."

Members of both delegations clearly saw this as a missed opportunity. **Many voiced concern that this difference diminished the mutuality of the experience**; some of the Spanish participants felt that this "infantilized" their delegation. **Moreover, they saw mutual action planning as a source of motivation to maintain long-term working linkages with their foreign counterparts**. A number of delegates from both countries posited the idea of action planning across continents – that is, pairing Spanish and US delegates to develop plans that build on shared interests and needs: "Why have an exchange if not to work together?" asked one of the Spanish participants. More than one Spanish delegate mentioned that establishing ongoing working relationships across countries is a common model of collaboration among European countries.

ITD noted that US delegates were given the option to develop action plans; however, the voluntary nature of the task resulted in none doing so. Most of the US participants recommended that action planning be an obligatory component of these types of projects.

## **PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT**

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Prior to the introduction of the independent evaluation in the final phase of the SPMY project, its participants – especially the Spanish delegation members – had already been given ample opportunity to voice their opinions about the content and quality of the project. Evaluative feedback had been solicited through ITD's internal evaluation processes – including weekly participant satisfaction and opinion surveys during the course of the Spaniards' travels in the US – as well as an evaluative session facilitated by the US Department of State during that delegation's visit to the District of Columbia.

The present evaluation also incorporates a line of inquiry soliciting recommendations for program improvement. This is not done in the interest of repetition, but rather for the following reasons: (1) the possibility that delegates may offer more candid feedback to an independent interviewer; (2) the prospect that with more temporal distance from their involvement, participants may have developed different or more nuanced perceptions of the experience; and (3) the opportunity to organize and analyze this feedback in a systematic manner.

### ☉ *SPANISH DELEGATION*

Delegates from Spain offered recommendations in the following areas: (1) pre-travel preparation; (2) content of itinerary; (3) flexible scheduling; (4) increased mutuality; (5) timetable for action planning; (6) involvement of youth; (7) inclusion of formal debriefings; and (8) post-travel expectations.

- **Pre-Travel Preparation**

A number of participants would have appreciated more information in preparation for their visit to the United States. It was proposed that a detailed schedule and dossier about the content of the program be distributed prior to travel. A few of the delegates suggested that presenters make their handouts or articles available before the trip, so that participants could familiarize themselves with the issues and, consequently, engage with presenters "on a deeper level." One delegate suggested that pre-travel meetings might have helped participants to establish common expectations.

- **Fewer Lectures – More Community Visits**

The delegates shared a preference for visits to community agencies over lectures. Although most appreciated the formal presentations, there were too many of them, in their opinion. [*"We often debated the same issues, lecture after lecture."*] It was suggested that required pre-travel reading might provide participants with some of the same information.

- **More Flexible Scheduling**

Given the diversity of the delegation, it is not surprising that there was a multiplicity of interests and priorities vis-à-vis the program activities. For example, the visits to community-based agencies were of such great interest to some of the delegates that they felt SPMY would have been improved by incorporating more time at these sites – even at the expense of reduced opportunities for sightseeing. Those who work directly with immigrants were eager to learn more about how community-based agencies function and how they are funded, especially in contrast to their own dependence on government funding. On the other hand, there were participants who found the visits to important landmarks in Boston, New York City, Chicago, and the District of Columbia to be essential educational experiences. Likewise, there were delegates who commented on their level of cumulative exhaustion, while others suggested the addition of evening programming.

It was recommended that the itinerary incorporate some degree of flexibility in order to respond to these divergent priorities.

- **Increased Mutuality**

One participant suggested that their delegation could have given a presentation while in the US – similar to the presentation given by the US delegates in Spain; this would have given credence to the idea that they were "equal partners" in the teaching and learning process. Another delegate would have appreciated more time for discussion and debate built into the formal presentations, which he thought would have signaled a greater recognition of equality between lecturers and delegation members. As referenced above, many felt strongly that action planning should have been a shared requirement among SPMY participants from both countries.

- **Action Planning Timetable**

A number of the delegates held the opinion that the action planning process was not well-suited to the chronological parameters of a three-week visit to the US. One participant suggested that information about action planning be communicated well in advance of travel, so that participants could consult with their colleagues at home before embarking on the planning process. Alternately, another delegate suggested that action plans be developed post-travel, in coordination with colleagues in the home country – and with ample support and technical assistance from ITD.

- **Youth Involvement**

A number of the delegates reiterated the need to involve youth directly in projects such as SPMY.

- **Formal Debriefings**

Some participants felt that they would have benefited from the opportunity to debrief with their colleagues after each day of activities. Although some did this informally in small groups, it was proposed that such debriefings be incorporated as a formal component of the schedule.

*[Correspondingly, many of the US delegates – who debriefed informally among themselves during their travels – also commented on the importance of learning from the perspectives of other delegation members; please see page 13.]*

- **Post-Travel Expectations**

There was a great deal of confusion regarding the timeline, activities, and expectations in the final phase of the project; it was suggested that these could have been more clearly communicated to the participants.

Virtually all interviewees expressed a desire for continued contact and collaboration with their foreign counterparts – as well as with their own compatriots – after travel was completed. In fact, many of them felt strongly that there should be a final meeting of the delegates from both countries. Although conscious of the cost and effort involved, participants nevertheless felt strongly that the deliberate maintenance of these connections would lead to greater programmatic impact. One low-cost recommendation was to create a shared website to facilitate long-term communication within and across delegations.

- **US DELEGATION**

The US delegates focused on the following areas for improvement: (1) pre-travel preparation; (2) intensity of scheduling; (3) articulation of learning objectives; (4) contact with immigrant youth; (5) quality of Spanish-English interpretation provided; (6) the conference held in Córdoba; and (7) post-travel expectations.

- **Pre-Travel Preparation**

One area for improvement cited by the US participants was the need for more extensive pre-travel guidance. Many delegates reported that they had done their own research to prepare for the trip; however, they were unanimous in their belief that preparation efforts coordinated by ITD would have been much more effective.

One US delegate mirrored the recommendation of a Spanish counterpart, saying "We could have used more information about the programs in advance; our time [in Spain] was spent asking basic questions instead of going deeper about challenges and nuances."

Many of the US participants described being unclear about expectations in certain situations – what one delegate called feeling "ill-equipped." In retrospect, delegates would have appreciated knowing how they should dress for various activities, what kinds of professional materials they were expected to bring, the types of people with whom they would be meeting, and the expectations for their participation in meetings and conferences.

US delegates strongly recommended the following pre-travel activities: **the distribution of suggested reading lists or reading materials** – especially those focused on the underlying factors of current Spanish immigration patterns; **pre-travel orientation meetings** held in person, via videoconference, *and/or* by conference call; **a finalized, detailed itinerary** distributed prior to travel; **packing suggestions** [*e.g. professional versus casual clothing, cool versus warm weather*]; an explanation of the **cultural significance of gift-giving**; and an **informational session with former ITD delegates from the US** who have traveled abroad.

- **Less Intensive Scheduling**

There was consensus among US participants that the itinerary in Spain was too ambitious. Although delegates were unanimous in their praise and appreciation for their experiences, they agreed that their days were too long and their itinerary, too crowded.

Many US delegates felt that the schedule resulted in a number of "lost opportunities" for deeper conversation, as it promoted shorter meeting times with many people. On the whole, the delegates felt that more time spent with fewer individuals might have resulted in a richer experience: "We often found that speaking one-on-one or in small groups was most valuable." One participant suggested that delegation members might have divided into small groups, met with a variety of individuals, and subsequently reconvened to share what they had learned.

- **Cohesive Learning Objectives**

Although all agreed that their experiences in Spain were for the most part "profound and positive," a few delegation members expressed a desire for more cohesive, articulated learning objectives and

expectations with respect to their travels. One participant suggested that it would have behooved the delegates to establish personal as well as organizational learning goals prior to travel.

Another expressed the view that their Spanish partners and hosts – who were responsible for the design and content of the itinerary in Spain – would have also benefited from increased clarity regarding goals and expectations. For example, as one participant suggested, "If they believed that it was important for us to understand Point A, Point B, and Point C, then they should design experiences in all of these areas to support those learning objectives." This latter point was widely-held; as one delegate said, "There was an occasional lack of clarity on the part of our hosts in Spain regarding expectations."

Participants emphasized the overall value of the trip – the occasional shortcoming notwithstanding. One delegate's comment was representative of this sentiment: "This doesn't diminish the experience at all. It was an amazing experience."

- **More Contact with Immigrant Youth**

Participants were very appreciative of the opportunities they were given to meet and engage in dialogue with new immigrants; they felt that these interactions provided them with a much deeper understanding of the situation faced by these individuals. As such, delegates suggested that the itinerary include more intentional opportunities to speak directly with Muslim and minority immigrants – especially youth.

- **Interpretation in Spain**

There was unanimous support for improvement in what was described as the "uneven quality" of interpretation provided to the US delegation in Spain. Participants noted that, in some instances, poor interpretation and infrequent simultaneous interpretation affected the quality of their interactions. In addition, monolingual and bilingual delegates alike cited the challenges of utilizing participants as interpreters. *[Participants felt that this was sometimes appropriate, as when in an informal situation, the two Arabic-speakers served as interpreters for unaccompanied minors; however, in most settings, more formal and higher quality interpretation was preferred.]*

- **Conference in Córdoba**

This conference was a disappointment to many. The US delegates who were asked to present at this conference described feeling "chagrined" and "embarrassed" by the lack of clarity about their roles and their consequential lack of preparation.

- **Post-Travel Expectations**

Like their Spanish colleagues, the US participants expressed a strong desire for continued contact and coordination with their foreign counterparts – as well as their own compatriots –post-travel.

## ITD's ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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The evaluative interview with SPMY's Project Director focused on: (1) ITD's perceived progress toward the project's objectives; (2) the agency's experience with action planning across cultures; and (3) valuable lessons learned from the administration and facilitation of the SPMY Project.

### ● PROGRESS TOWARD PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Over and above the goals outlined in the project's initial proposal, SPMY's Project Director described additional objectives that ITD had hoped to achieve through this initiative – and the successes and challenges encountered in the process.

#### ● Portrayals of Immigrant Integration in the US

To begin with, ITD endeavored to provide the members of the Spanish delegation with an accurate picture of how immigrants – and especially Muslim immigrants – live in the US and the extent to which they feel a part of US society.

Based on informal observations as well as ITD's internal evaluation processes, the Project Director surmised that SPMY was indeed successful in providing the delegates from Spain with this perspective. SPMY's Project Director reported that the perceptions of many participants "changed 180 degrees." This feedback is corroborated by interview data described in this report. *[Although it is noteworthy that at least one participant also expressed a desire to meet more new immigrants and more poor immigrants; please see page 9.]*

The independent evaluation process substantiated the delegates' surprise at the sense of belonging expressed by so many immigrants and ethnic minorities *[see page 8]*. In fact, one of the Muslim participants revised his action plan with the intention of developing this sense of identity and pride among Muslim youth living in his Spanish city *[see page 20]*.

#### ● Information and Motivation

In addition, ITD intended for members of the Spanish delegation to return home with the information as well as the motivation necessary to work – or continue to work – to make a positive difference on behalf of the Muslim immigrants who struggle to make a life for themselves in Spain.

During the evaluative interview, SPMY's Project Director explained the distinction between information and motivation in regard to these outcomes. In terms of the former, it proved difficult to provide delegates with practical information, since models of Muslim integration in the US were not easily applied to the reality of Muslim immigrants in Spain. Interestingly, the Project Director

noted that a more useful comparison emerged between that reality and the situation of Mexican immigrants in the US.

With respect to motivation, however, the Project Director reported that the delegates returned to Spain feeling very inspired in terms of their respective roles in the area of immigrant integration. She described the "deep, personal impact" of their experiences in the US; she saw evidence of this manifested in the care and effort they invested in preparing for and facilitating the visit of the US delegation to Spain, as well as in the energy they eventually directed toward their action plans.

*[This perception is corroborated by the interviews and observations conducted as part of the formal evaluation. Data from the independent evaluation indicate that delegates from both countries were motivated to act as a result of their participation in SPMY.]*

- **Consequences of Participant Selection vis-à-vis Desired Outcomes**

Throughout the interviews with Spanish delegates, the topic of the delegation's composition was a repeated point of discussion. It was also a topic of analysis in the course of the interview with SPMY's Project Director. It is noteworthy that, from an organizational vantage point, the collective profile of the SPMY participants from Spain was unintended – and, at least initially, was considered undesirable.

According to the Project Director, it proved difficult for ITD and CETA to identify individuals who were actively engaged with the Muslim immigrant community in Spain; these were the intended targets of SPMY recruitment. ITD and CETA found a smaller-than-expected concentration of immigration activists in Andalucía, where recruitment was carried out. The Project Director explained that ITD focused its recruitment efforts in Andalucía based on their organizational contacts there, as well as on demographic data that indicated a substantial concentration of recent Muslim immigrants. In retrospect, however, she expressed the opinion that SPMY might have been better suited to another geographic region in Spain, such as Almería, where there are greater concentrations of recent immigrants from North Africa.

The resulting delegation from Andalucía had only three members who were themselves Muslim immigrants to Spain; a few of the other delegates – ethnic Spaniards – had spent many years working in and with Muslim communities. The other half of the delegation was composed of Spaniards who had nascent and genuine interest in the situation of Muslim immigrants in Spain, but little experience.

In the opinion of the Project Director, the configuration of this delegation had numerous repercussions for the SPMY Project – some of which hindered progress toward anticipated outcomes, but others that produced unexpected results.

One of its benefits was the degree to which participation in SPMY raised the awareness and motivation of those delegates who were unfamiliar with Muslim immigration; this is corroborated by individual as well as group interviews. Less favorably, these participants did not have established connections to or experience in the Muslim community, which limited their possibilities in the realm of action planning. Moreover, the divergent levels of experience and commitment among delegation members provoked what many described as frequent disagreements and debates.

### ◎ *ACTION PLANNING IN CONTEXT*

ITD utilizes the action planning process with most of its international delegations. The organization's objectives vis-à-vis the use of action plans are quite straightforward: They are meant, in the words of SPMY's Project Director, to insure that the impact of a delegate's experiences "goes beyond photographs and a folder of materials to file away." ITD "feels an obligation to the American taxpayer as well as to the participants to force a connection between what [delegates] have learned [in the US] and the reality of their lives [in the home country]."

Action plans are a vehicle by which to transport the energy, motivation, and learning gains that participants bring with them as they return to their communities. An action plan may be based on a theme discussed or modeled on an institution visited in the course of travel; delegates may use their experiences in the US as a springboard for further exploration. The facilitation of the action planning process must strike a balance between providing adequate theoretical structure without dictating content.

The only parameter prescribed by ITD in the development of SPMY action plans was that the content be focused on Muslim immigrants in Spain – or in the ethnic Spanish community in relation to Muslim immigration.

The Project Director underscored that some SPMY delegates articulated resistance to the action planning process, even though the requirement had been explained to them beforehand. The idea was neither well-received nor understood, at the outset.

ITD recommended that participants collaborate on the plans, in order to maximize results and share resources; they gave suggestions regarding the make-up of subgroups for action planning with the intention of encouraging dialogue beyond members' "natural circles." Although the delegates eventually reconfigured themselves into working groups, SPMY's Project Director felt that this initial process was positive, in that it facilitated greater professional and personal familiarity among participants.

ITD's long experience with action plans suggests that a greater allotment of time spent on their development generally corresponds to a more successful action planning process; the repetition is

necessary to insure that the delegates "understand what [ITD is] after – the idea is more difficult to grasp than one might expect." However, despite the fact that SPMY participants devoted a considerable amount of time to action planning, extensive disagreements among participants impeded the development of the plans.

After a long and labored process, delegates were in fact able to develop plans toward which they showed "remarkable dedication," according to the Project Director. As is referenced earlier in this report, by the time the independent evaluation was conducted almost one year after the delegation returned home, participants had most certainly devoted time and energy to the implementation of the plans– although, not surprisingly, some more than others.

### ● *VALUABLE LESSONS LEARNED*

ITD has facilitated many, many international delegations over the years, and each one engenders distinct lessons. The SPMY Project provided an opportunity for reflection regarding: (1) the benefits of mutual exchanges; (2) the corresponding challenges of shared planning; and (3) the unique lessons to be learned from the situation of Muslim immigrants in Spain.

#### ● **Value of Exchange**

SPMY was ITD's second exchange in the history of its work with international delegations. The premise that Americans can learn from as well as teach their foreign colleagues was described by SPMY's Project Director as "exciting" and "enriching." This enthusiasm and enhancement was corroborated in every respect by the evaluation data generated through interviews with participants from both countries.

In ITD's view, SPMY's goals were well served by the exchange in numerous ways. Overall, the exchange supported action in Spain – not because the US visit occasioned the provision of abundant expertise, but rather because the presence of US delegates served to "reboot" the Spaniards' motivation and their connection to these issues in a global context. Furthermore, the arrival of the US delegation obliged the Spanish delegates to remain in contact with each other in order to plan for and receive their visitors. The visit was also an opportunity to discuss and re-examine the action plans *in person* – a process which, according to ITD, increases the likelihood of implementation.

In addition, the Spanish delegates recounted in their interviews that the mutual nature of the exchange contributed significantly to their positive attitudes about Americans and the US in general.

#### ● **Challenges of Shared Planning**

When it was the US delegation's turn to visit Spain, ITD was committed to conferring "ownership" of that planning process to the Spanish participants. The enthusiasm of the latter group led to the development of a "wonderful" but "totally overwhelming" program, which SPMY's Project Director

described as "exhausting and overbooked." The schedule was so full that there was no time for the formalized debriefings that ITD had intended to facilitate with the US delegates; instead, delegation members met only once to share their perceptions. *[It should be noted, however, that many of the delegates engaged in informal debriefings, which they found very instructive; please see page 13.]*

It is ITD's hope to be involved in many more exchanges like SPMY. As a result, the organization made note of the need to set clear parameters around scheduling. In fact, ITD already developed and implemented such constraints in the planning stages of another European exchange.

On the whole, ITD recognized the need to provide more direction and lend its expertise to its exchange partners regarding the development of program itinerary.

- **Unique Lessons from SPMY**

SPMY's Project Director found it to be a "fascinating" endeavor on account of two primary characteristics. First, Spain itself is at such an "early yet striking" phase of Muslim and minority immigration; this intensified ITD's desire to act proactively in order to help mitigate what is likely to be a growing problem. In addition, the unintended imbalance of the Spanish delegation resulted in the creation of a microcosm of the challenges confronted by ethnic Spaniards and minority immigrants in Spain.

In terms of this latter factor, the Project Director reported that "nobody came around to see the world from somebody else's perspective," despite lengthy and intensive discussions. Interestingly, this observation supports the view of one of the Muslim participants *[see page 10]* but is in contrast to the reports of many of the ethnic Spaniards, who spoke of how much they felt they'd learned from their delegate cohorts *[see page 9]*.

SPMY's Project Director believes that the Muslim participants felt "cheated" that no one truly grew to understand their situation, while some of the ethnic Spaniards believed that their own compassion and sympathy went unrecognized; this ongoing conflict was described as a "vicious circle." It was noted that a future program could be dedicated exclusively to team-building and the mediation of discussions aimed to create understanding; this model of conflict resolution could be taken back to the home country for implementation. The SPMY Project, however, entailed a very distinct set of goals; within that reality, ITD did what it could to facilitate their achievement.

As is often the case when a study is based on the responses of astute and articulate subjects, the data in this report speak for themselves to a large extent. As such, this penultimate section of the evaluation report is devoted primarily to examining the most salient points of the study's findings.

### ☉ **Multiple Values of Mutuality**

Exchange programs – whereby international visitors come to the United States and subsequently host a US delegation in their home country – provide substantial benefits to Americans as well as to their foreign partners. The mutuality engendered by means of these exchanges promotes a very positive image of the US abroad. In addition, there are myriad inadvertent outcomes for US participants: members of SPMY's US delegation reported significant learning gains, including a greater understanding of and solidarity with ordinary Muslims; linkages to other professionals who work in minority and immigrant communities; and potential models for improving their own services and programs.

It is noteworthy that the order of these visits appears to have consequences for program outcomes. When foreign delegates come to the US first, they are able to appreciate the strengths as well as weaknesses of US models; this minimizes the appearance of superiority or arrogance on the part of US visitors to their country. Genuine mutuality increases the ability of all participants to teach and learn from each other.

### ☉ **Delegation Diversity**

The selection of participants for such delegations is fraught with complexity. Legitimate arguments can be made for homogenous as well as heterogeneous groupings based on ethnicity, experience, *and/or* professional affiliation. In the case of SPMY's Spanish delegation, ITD had endeavored to achieve professional as well as ethnic diversity among participants. However, the recruitment process [*described on page 28*] produced only three Muslim immigrants in the delegation, alongside nine ethnic Spaniards; in addition, many of the latter group had minimal experience working directly with immigrants.

As it was, the configuration of the delegation brought to the fore the very challenges facing Spanish society and minority immigrants within that society. This dynamic offered a great learning opportunity to the group, in conjunction with considerable strife. Conversely, one could contend that a delegation composed exclusively of Muslims or immigrants or a single professional group might be more likely to develop collective action plans that could effect greater, sustainable change in the home country.

### ☉ **Establishment of Participant Objectives**

From an evaluative standpoint, there is considerable value in requesting that delegates enumerate their individual and organizational objectives for their participation prior to travel. If participants are provided with ample information about the project and its itinerary, it may be feasible for them to articulate desired outcomes that can be measured post-participation.

### ☉ **Flexibility in Scheduling**

Some of the delegates – especially those from Spain – voiced divergent opinions regarding how they would have preferred to spend their time. Many would have liked to extend their visits at community-based agencies, learning more about how such organizations are funded and structured. Some participants wished for a greater degree of interaction with new immigrants – to see, rather than hear, how they live and feel.

It was suggested that some programmatic flexibility might be built into the schedule; for example, there might be an option for extended visits at some sites or an occasional "conference model" wherein participants choose between two activities. Although the logistics of these may ultimately prove too complicated to overcome, these ideas are worth considering.

### ☉ **Formal Debriefings**

Regular debriefings appear to provide important benefits for participants. These meetings allow delegates to share diverse interpretations and perceptions, as well as to forge stronger connections among them. As such, it is recommended that regular, formal debriefings be included in the schedule for delegations to and from the United States.

### ☉ **Experimenting with the Action Planning Process**

It is not possible within the scope of this evaluation to discern if the Spanish delegation's difficulties with action planning were inherent in its group dynamics, or whether an alternative model of action planning facilitation might have resulted in a more straightforward process. Although ITD has extensive experience in the development of action plans, it may be useful for the organization to explore changes or additions to its existing model.

ITD could attempt to identify key characteristics of successful action planning across various cultural groups by studying its own experience as well as relevant research.

In addition, it would be beneficial for participants to include detailed evaluative measurements in their action plans, like periodic benchmarks and final desired outcomes. In this way, delegates and others would be better poised to assess their progress in this regard.

Finally, it would be useful for ITD to provide assistance or information to delegates whose action plans will require outside funding.

### ☉ **Universal Action Planning**

Given the primacy of mutuality in these exchanges, it is judicious to make the action planning process obligatory for US delegates as well as for their foreign colleagues. The introduction of universal action planning can also serve to clarify post-travel expectations for all participants. It is important to note that this change would require funding to support the oversight and evaluation of an increased number of action plans.

### ☉ **Long-Term Impact and Sustainability**

Delegates from both countries expressed their deep gratitude to the US Department of State for the opportunity to participate in SPMY. Notwithstanding their appreciation, some were quite concerned that the US government had invested a great deal of money in the project but had not taken sufficient advantage of SPMY to forge long-term working relationships within and across countries.

Some participants proposed the formation of action planning teams composed of Americans and Spaniards, or action plans that involved all of the delegates in one country. While there is significant potential for the development of long-term linkages and impact in such configurations, it would be impossible to sustain these relationships without adequate long-term funding and oversight.

The necessity for administrative oversight and practical support of such efforts cannot be overstated. The experiences of SPMY delegates have shown this to be true: delegates from Córdoba, Jerez, and Melilla determined that it was unrealistic for them to collaborate on an action plan because of the geographic distance between their cities; bringing delegates together for one-time evaluative interviews in Córdoba and Northampton proved time-consuming and challenging; setting up international telephone calls is cumbersome; and the difficulty faced by an action planning group in Spain when one partner moved from Andalucía was significant. If ITD were to oversee the development and implementation of national or cross-continental action plans, the funding and follow up required would be considerable.

## CONCLUSION

The data contained in these pages speak to the impact that SPMY has occasioned for each of the delegates from Spain and the United States. These findings also affirm the capacity of ITD to facilitate such impact.

While certain areas for improvement were identified in the course of this report, it should be noted that ITD had already been aware of and taken action on a number of these recommendations before the submission of the present report. Many of the issues broached in the report are not easily resolved but, like the social dilemma the program aimed to address, must be carefully considered and rectified to the extent possible.

Perhaps the greatest vote of confidence for the project was evidenced in the collective voice of the participants on each side of the ocean, appealing that the US Department of State insure this type of program is repeated – not just in Spain, but in other parts of the world, as well.

In order for such projects to fulfill their potential, it will be necessary for the Department of State to consider the impact it wishes to make – and, correspondingly, to assess what investments are necessary to support and sustain such results.